

5 Big 5 at Work

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The Big 5 at Work Assessment

How the assessment works, the science it is built on, and what you receive in the comprehensive report.

Big 5 at Work measures personality using the Five Factor Model, the most widely researched framework in personality psychology, and translates the results into the language of everyday work: how you plan, collaborate, handle pressure, share ideas, and work through disagreement. The goal is development. Every trait position comes with real strengths and predictable pitfalls, and there is no correct setting.

01	The Five Factor Model	Page 2
02	The five traits at work	Page 3
03	How the assessment works	Page 4
04	Scoring, privacy and responsible use	Page 5
05	Inside the comprehensive report	Page 6
06	Free vs. comprehensive, and references	Page 7

THE SCIENCE

The Five Factor Model

The Five Factor Model, often called the Big Five or OCEAN, describes personality along five broad dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Each is a continuous spectrum rather than a type, so a result describes where you tend to sit relative to other people, not which box you belong in.

The model was not invented by a single theorist. It emerged from decades of independent research that kept arriving at the same five dimensions. Researchers started from the idea that the personality differences people care about most get encoded in everyday language, catalogued thousands of descriptive words, and used statistical analysis to see which ones cluster together. The same five clusters kept appearing across different samples, languages, and questionnaires.

1936

Allport and Odbert catalogue roughly 18,000 English words that describe people, the starting point for the lexical approach.

1961

Tupes and Christal, analyzing U.S. Air Force rating data, find five recurring factors. Norman replicates the structure in 1963.

1990

Goldberg's work consolidates the "Big Five" label and shows the structure holds across large sets of trait adjectives.

1992

Costa and McCrae publish the NEO PI-R, defining 30 narrower facets, six beneath each trait.

Why it is the research standard

It replicates

The five-factor structure has been found across dozens of cultures and languages, including a study of 56 nations (Schmitt et al., 2007). McCrae and Costa described it as close to a human universal.

It is stable

People's relative standing on traits becomes more consistent with age and stays high (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Average levels still shift, most of all in young adulthood.

It predicts real life

Long-term studies find that traits predict health and relationship outcomes about as well as family income or IQ do, though the effects are modest (Roberts et al., 2007).

How Big 5 at Work frames the traits

Your traits are your default, not your destiny: they're where you start, and where you drift back to under pressure, and overriding them for long stretches is tiring. The strategies you build are how you go further. That is why the assessment never scores a trait as good or bad. A high score and a low score each carry a superpower and a pitfall, and the most useful question is how to put your natural settings to work and how to work well with people whose settings differ from yours.

OCEAN

The five traits at work

Each trait is measured through narrower facets, which is what lets two people with the same overall score show up differently. The comprehensive report scores every facet listed below.

O Openness	Curiosity about ideas, experiences, and new ways of doing things. People who score higher tend to generate options, question assumptions, and get restless with routine. People who score lower tend to value what already works, keep projects grounded, and implement reliably. Facets: Imagination · Artistic Interests · Emotionality · Adventurousness · Intellect
C Conscientiousness	Organization, follow-through, and a preference for planning. Higher scorers tend to be thorough and dependable, sometimes at the cost of flexibility or speed. Lower scorers tend to adapt quickly, improvise well, and move before every detail is settled. Facets: Self-Efficacy · Orderliness · Dutifulness · Achievement-Striving · Self-Discipline · Cautiousness
E Extraversion	How much energy you draw from people, activity, and stimulation. Higher scorers tend to think out loud, build momentum in groups, and speak up readily. Lower scorers tend to think before speaking, focus deeply, and contribute their best ideas after reflection. Facets: Friendliness · Gregariousness · Assertiveness · Activity Level · Excitement-Seeking · Cheerfulness
A Agreeableness	The balance between cooperation and challenge. Higher scorers tend to build trust, smooth friction, and put the group first, and may avoid hard conversations. Lower scorers tend to be direct, push back on weak ideas, and negotiate firmly. Facets: Trust · Morality · Altruism · Cooperation · Modesty · Sympathy
N Neuroticism	Sensitivity to stress, risk, and negative emotion. Higher scorers tend to spot problems early and care intensely about outcomes, and can carry more worry. Lower scorers tend to stay steady under pressure and may underreact to real warning signs. Facets: Anxiety · Anger · Depression · Self-Consciousness · Immoderation · Vulnerability

METHODOLOGY

How the assessment works

Big 5 at Work is built on the IPIP-NEO-120, a public-domain Big Five inventory from the International Personality Item Pool that measures all five traits and 30 facets (Johnson, 2014). We kept its structure and scoring method and rewrote the wording for the workplace.

Every statement describes a work behavior

General personality inventories ask about life at large. Each Big 5 at Work statement is written from a specific IPIP item, keeps that item's facet, and describes a concrete behavior at work.

Respondents rate how accurately each one describes them "at work," on a five-point scale from "Very inaccurate" to "Very accurate."

Researchers call this frame-of-reference adaptation: asking how people behave in one setting, like work, instead of in life in general.

Adjusted for an honest workplace response

The four items in the original inventory that ask about political views were removed, so Openness is measured through five facets rather than six. That leaves 116 scored statements.

A small number of statements were reworded so the low end of a facet reads the way people there would describe themselves. People answer more candidly when a statement doesn't sound like an admission they'd worry about a manager seeing.

Two parts, one profile

1

FREE

58 statements

The first half of the inventory, on six short pages, takes about ten minutes. Five unscored workplace scenarios are mixed in to make the experience feel like work, not a form.

2

COMPREHENSIVE

58 more statements

The second half completes the full inventory, so every facet has all four of its items and can be scored reliably.

3

COMPREHENSIVE

A guided conversation

An AI guide walks through each trait, refers to your answers, asks an open question, and describes what the score suggests. You confirm it or say what feels off.

4

COMPREHENSIVE

Your full report

You choose a working relationship you want help with, and the report brings together your scores, your own words, and a coaching script for that situation.

Why a conversation, not just a questionnaire

Questionnaire scores are a strong starting point, but people know context a statement can't capture. The guided conversation lets you add that context, and if a description doesn't fit, you can ask for a revision or adjust the score yourself. Your corrections then shape the report you receive.

SCORING

How scores are calculated

Scoring follows the published IPIP method, so results are calculated the same way for everyone and never generated by AI.

1

Score each answer

Answers run from 1 to 5. Statements written in the opposite direction of the trait are reverse-scored so that a higher number always means more of the trait.

2

Build facets and traits

Each facet is the sum of its four statements. Each trait score combines its facets, which keeps any single facet from dominating.

3

Compare with others

Scores are reported as percentiles from 1 to 99. A 72nd percentile means you scored higher than about 72 percent of the comparison group.

Comparison group and ongoing validation

Percentiles are currently based on published IPIP-NEO-120 norms from more than 320,000 respondents (Kajonius & Johnson, 2018). Because our statements are workplace versions of the originals, we treat these comparisons as provisional and say so in every set of results.

With consent, anonymous responses from early groups will be used to confirm each trait's and facet's reliability, refine any statement that isn't distinguishing between people, and build norms from Big 5 at Work respondents. We won't publish reliability figures for this version until our own data supports them.

Privacy

Individual answers are never shown to a manager, HR, or teammates. Sharing is opt-in: once someone shares, teammates, team leads and company admins see their five trait percentiles. Facet scores and the full report stay private. People see this before they begin.

Responsible use

Big 5 at Work is designed for development: self-awareness, coaching, workshops, and better collaboration. It is not designed or validated for hiring, promotion, or performance evaluation decisions, and we ask organizations not to use it that way.

Language in every report is pattern-based: it describes what research shows people with similar scores tend to do, rather than making claims about any one person's biology or destiny.

THE DELIVERABLE

Inside the comprehensive report

The report is written for the person who took the assessment, in plain language, and runs about four designed pages. It can be read on screen, downloaded as a branded PDF, and saved to the person's account.

01 Your portrait

An opening synthesis of how your five traits combine, drawing on your scores and what you shared in the conversation.

02 At a glance

All five trait percentiles side by side, so the overall shape of your profile is visible immediately.

03 Trait-by-trait analysis

For each trait, a chart of the trait and facet percentiles alongside three short sections: a Summary, your Superpower, and your Pitfall.

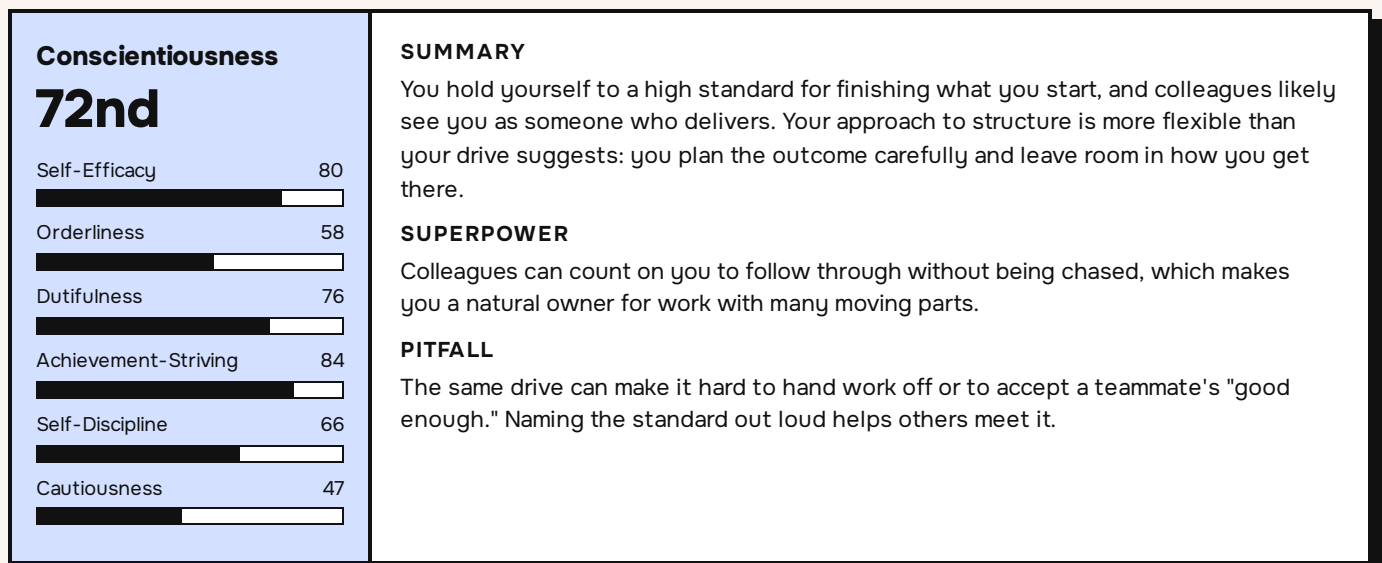
04 A coaching script for a real situation

Built from the "Two Things Are True" method in Christin's book: honor the other person's reality, name the Objective Constraints (a deadline, budget, requirement or risk anyone could verify), and solve it together.

05 Next steps

Ways to keep going, including team profiles and Big 5 at Work workshops.

Sample trait section (illustrative)



AT A GLANCE

Free vs. comprehensive

	Free assessment	Comprehensive
Scored statements	58	All 116
Five trait percentiles	✓	✓
Facet scores (29 facets)	—	✓
Guided AI conversation with the option to correct your results	—	✓
Portrait, trait analysis, superpowers and pitfalls	—	✓
"Two Things Are True" coaching script	—	✓
Branded PDF, saved reports and emailed results link	—	✓
Share trait scores with a team	—	✓

For teams and organizations

Teams can take the assessment together and see how their five-trait profiles fit side by side, which pairs naturally with a Big 5 at Work workshop. Workshops cover what the traits look like at work, why friction between different profiles is predictable rather than personal, and how to use the Two Things Are True method in real conversations. To talk about a team or group rollout, visit big5atwork.com.

References

- Allport, G. W., & Odbert, H. S. (1936). Trait-names: A psycho-lexical study. *Psychological Monographs*, 47(1).
- Costa, P. T., Jr., & McCrae, R. R. (1992). Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) professional manual. Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(6), 1216–1229.
- Johnson, J. A. (2014). Measuring thirty facets of the Five Factor Model with a 120-item public domain inventory: Development of the IPIP-NEO-120. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 51, 78–89.
- Kajonius, P. J., & Johnson, J. A. (2018). Sex differences in 30 facets of the five factor model of personality in the large public (N = 320,128). *Personality and Individual Differences*, 129, 126–130.
- McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (1997). Personality trait structure as a human universal. *American Psychologist*, 52(5), 509–516.
- Roberts, B. W., & DelVecchio, W. F. (2000). The rank-order consistency of personality traits from childhood to old age: A quantitative review of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(1), 3–25.
- Roberts, B. W., Kuncel, N. R., Shiner, R., Caspi, A., & Goldberg, L. R. (2007). The power of personality: The comparative validity of personality traits, socioeconomic status, and cognitive ability for predicting important life outcomes. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2(4), 313–345.
- Roberts, B. W., Walton, K. E., & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(1), 1–25.
- Schmitt, D. P., et al. (2007). The geographic distribution of Big Five personality traits across 56 nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 38(2), 173–212.
- Tupes, E. C., & Christal, R. E. (1961). Recurrent personality factors based on trait ratings (ASD-TR-61-97). U.S. Air Force.